

MINUTES
General Education Committee
December 9, 2025
1:00pm-2:30pm
Montecito Room

Members present: Michelle Hardley (Secretary, Registrar), Heather Keaney (Professor of History), Jana Mayfield Mullen (Director, Library & Information Services), Tatiana Nazarenko (Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness), Dave Wolf (Professor of Kinesiology), Telford Work (Chair, Professor of Religious Studies)

Absent:

I. Prayer – Jana Mayfield Mullen

II. Approval of the minutes from November 25, 2025
The minutes were approved.

III. Exploring the Physical Sciences/Exploring the Life Sciences Syllabus Audit Follow-Up
GE Committee members have reached out to the various faculty teaching Exploring the Life Science and Exploring the Physical Science courses this fall. A number of them indicated that they would be making changes to their syllabi in response to the feedback.

The next steps are to work on the assessment plan for these two GE areas for next semester. We need to determine what assessment measure will be used and who will take the lead on the assessment coordination. We could opt to use the same assessment measure that we have used in the past, or we could look for a different measure/method.

This item will be continued in the spring 2026 semester.

IV. Oral Communication and Written Communication Follow-Up
We need to determine the most efficient method for evaluating the current Writing/Speech Intensive (WSI) courses to meet the new Oral Communication or Written Communication GE categories. We don't have the manpower on the committee to re-evaluate all of the currently approved WSI courses by the time they are offered in the 2026-2027 school year.

Telford would like to take a softer approach and send instructions to the current faculty teaching in this area on how to modify their WSI syllabi to meet the Written Communication requirements. Then faculty can independently update their syllabi and we will evaluate them in the next year through the syllabus review process.

The committee suggested sending this information out on a regular basis. It might need to be a monthly reminder in the spring and summer to work on this change, as faculty will vary on the timeframe, they use to start preparing their syllabi for the next semester. Courses will have the additional GE credit added in the course record as the 2026-2027 schedule is created in February/March.

It was suggested to also mention in the note that the Writing Intensive will be assessed next year, so there is an advantage to taking care of this early in their preparation for the next course offering. It may also be a good idea to give faculty an idea of how big of a change this is between the WSI criteria and the Written Communication criteria. That way they have a sense of how much their syllabus needs to change. Telford will work on formatting an express submission form with both the old and new requirements in the document and send it to Tatiana.

V. Critical Thinking Assessment Follow-Up

Tatiana reviewed the results of the Critical Thinking Assessment work last year. Our students seemed to struggle on the same 4 questions (Questions 4, 7 14 and 15) in the survey, which dealt with identifying additional information needed in a scenario, explaining the best solution for a real-world problem using relevant information and explaining how changes in a real-world problem would affect the solution.

Committee members wondered whether certain majors attracted students who were naturally better at critical thinking than others, which is why some departments scored higher than others. They also wondered whether students scored higher when the situational context of the question matched terms and concepts that were part of their academic disciplines. They also had questions on the testing procedure used at other schools. If other schools use the scores as part of a class grade or graduation requirement, students might take the exam more seriously than they do at Westmont, where it is optional.

The GE Committee discussed sharing with the general faculty a number of ways that they could work to increase critical thinking in their courses. There would be an invitation to incorporate some of these suggestions into their classes and an invitation to report back their experience if they did. We could invite all faculty to

participate, but also note this at the department chairs meeting to see if the department chairs could encourage having this as a focus for the department.

VI. Other Business

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Hardley